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Title:

ALP Broadcast, Station 5KA, presented by Don Dunstan Member for Norwood

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A.L.P. BROADCAST, STATION 5KA, 5th MARCH, 1962

PRESENTED BY DON DUNSTAN - MEMBER FOR HORWOOD

Good Evening,

On Saturday last the people of South Australia voted Labor to office by an overwhelming majority of votes. There were a few uncontested seats, but in these seats Labor represents more electors than do the Liberals.

In the seats which were contested, Labor polled about 56% of the votes cast and a majority of over 80,000 people, as against the Liberals 33%. The Liberals allies, the D.L.P. polled a reduced and completely insignificant vote except in the cases where they ran candidates in seats which were not contested by both the major parties, so that they there received either Labor or Liberal votes in the absence of a Labor or a Liberal candidate as the case may be.

No better illustration of the fraudulent electoral system under which we suffer can be given than has been given by this election. That 56% of the voters should support Labor and it only win at most 19 seats out of 39 is a complete travesty of justice and democracy. What is more that a dictator, with the support of about 1/3rd of the people of this State only, should cling to office in the face of the clearly expressed will of the people is shameful and preposterous. But that, it appears, is what Sir Thomas Playford will attempt to do.

Let me remind you of what members of the L.C.L. itself have had to say about this, in a pamphlet printed for circulation inside the L.C.L. only:-

"We are all convinced Liberals and have been members of the L.C.L. for many years. Indeed, it is precisely because we are Liberals that we urge reform. We are not ashamed of our ideals, and are prepared to stand by them. We do not believe that our Party, or any other group of people is worthy of governing unless it is prepared to let its ideals be known, and then stick to them. So we find it too much to stand by idly and see many of the tried and tested principles of liberalism deliberately flouted in South Australia for the selfish and cynical advantage of the very Party which claims to uphold them.

"The House of Assembly consists of thirty nine members. In order to elect them South Australia is divided into thirty nine single electorates. Consequently each

electorate "returns" one member to the House of Assembly. Those electorates are of very uneven size both as regards area and population.

"Here lies what we believe to be the basic unfairness of the present electoral system. It is here that we believe we can approach much closer to the ideal of democratic parliamentary government.

"These thirty nine electorates are of very uneven size - some have many more electors in them than have others. There are very extreme cases, but even when we examine the average, reform is clearly required. The average metropolitan electorate contains more than three times as many people as does the average country electorate.

"How has this come about? Through the principle upon which the State is divided into electorates. That principle is that there shall be twice as many electorates in the country as in the city, quite irrespective of the distribution of the population.

"It follows that twenty six of the thirty nine members of the House of Assembly - two out of every three - represent country electorates BUT when we look at the population of the State as a whole we find that about two thirds of the people live in the metropolitan area and only about one-third in the country.

"Consequently we find that one third of the population is represented in the House of Assembly by two thirds of the members - twenty six of them - and the other two-thirds of the population is represented by only thirteen members.

"Several reasons have caused the L.C.L. to become and to remain the largest group in the House of Assembly. But gradually one reason along, and that not to our credit, has come to predominate - that is the electoral system sketched above. The electoral system has certainly not been the only reason for Liberal predominance, but it is fair to say that it is the only real one today.

"It is wrong, gravely unjust, that one party should always win elections and consequently always be the government, even when the other party gains an overall majority of votes.

"That is what is happening in South Australia now. At the last general election the Labor Party almost certainly won an overall majority of votes, yet the L.C.L. won twenty-one seats in the House of Assembly and the Labor Party only fourteen.

"Can we, then, justify it for any reason at all?

"The answer is "No", for there is no justification for believing that we should always be in power and our opponents always be denied the legitimate chance of every party in opposition - a chance to work the machinery of government if they can persuade a majority of electors to support them.

"Overall the conditions throughout the Commonwealth of Australia are very similar to those throughout the State of South Australia. In other words, South Australia, a segment of the Commonwealth, mirrors it closely but on a smaller scale.

If the system will work well in the Federal sphere, it will work just as well in the ~~the~~ State sphere ~~anyway~~ too.

"As for the sort of system we have in South Australia now, this is what one modern "giant" would say of it:-

"Government of the people by my party, for me, is not democracy. It is just a system of crooked bargaining. It cannot support any decent new order, and it is not worth fighting for."

R. G. Menzies in "Forgotten People"
page 173.